



**MINUTES OF THE CITY OF WEST JORDAN  
CITY COUNCIL  
TRUTH IN TAXATION HEARING**

**Tuesday August 24, 2021 - 6:00 pm**  
**Approved September 22, 2021**

West Jordan City Council Chambers • 8000 S Redwood Road • West Jordan, UT 84088

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**COUNCIL:** Chair Zach Jacob, Vice-Chair Kelvin Green, Chad Lamb, Christopher McConnehey, David Pack, Kayleen Whitelock, and Melissa Worthen

**STAFF:** Council Office Director Alan R. Anderson, Community Engagement & Government Affairs Director Tauni Barker, Mayor Dirk Burton, City Administrator Korban Lee, Council Office Clerk Cindy Quick, Administrative Services Director Danyce Steck, and City Attorney Robert Wall

## **TRUTH IN TAXATION HEARING 6:00 PM – *Council Chambers***

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Jacob called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm

### **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Burton led participants in the pledge of allegiance

### **3. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

#### ***a. Truth in Taxation***

Administrative Services Director Danyce Steck explained the process the city was required to go through for truth in taxation. She reported that the value for the city overall went up 9% and the tax rate fell by 9% to give the city the same amount of dollars for the dollars of the value in our city. The City does receive more property tax revenue when new growth takes place, however, that increase is based on the same rate as the previous year.

Historically the City has done two property tax increases: an increase in 2012 of 17% for inflation, and the first increase since 1988; and an increase in 2018 of 18% to add 9 firefighters and 8 police officers.

A property tax statement was reviewed pointing out that 55% of property tax goes to schools, 22% goes to the county, 16% goes to the City, 7% goes to the water districts, and less than 1% goes to Mosquito Abatement. The statement of an elected official was used as an example to show how the tax rate would change if the proposed increase was approved.

A chart comparing property tax rates for each city in the county was shown. It was noted that West Jordan is a full service city and the revenue received brings in enough to pay for 70% of the police department employees but none of the fire department employees. The chart also showed the amount of property tax that would be paid for an average home valued at \$380,000 in comparison to other cities in the county.

Property tax funds would be used for the public safety compensation plan adjustment. Residents have asked that the council approve small incremental increases regularly rather than large increases periodically, like those that have taken place in the past. The proposed increase would help sustain the five year public safety compensation plan. Other uses for the funds would go towards maintenance of city parks, roads, and buildings, as well as community improvements such as pickleball courts, trails, road overlays, etc.

It was noted that the best practices for property tax moving forward would be to set a foundation that will be used as a guide for the City to adjust property tax on a more regular basis. It should allow a public process for constituents to address the Council and for the Council to think about the future and the needs of the City. Historically the Council has only adjusted the property tax in response to a necessity and not in anticipation. Ms. Steck felt that it was best to address the inflation on a regular basis. Additional adjustments may be needed to maintain or increase service level demands such as the need to increase police compensation.

Council Member David Pack asked for clarification regarding the residential reduction on the fair market value of homes. The response was that the assessed value was reduced by 45% so you are only paying 55% of the full market value of your home.

### **Council Chair Zach Jacob opened the hearing at 6:25 PM**

#### Citizen Comments:

Brian Nevell, a resident, reported that his income went up by 1.6% in 2020, and only 1.3% in 2021 being that he is retired and lives on a fixed income. The proposal for property tax increase was more than the increase to his income. He wondered how he would cover the proposed increase. He asked the Council to remember those on a fixed income noting that his income did not go up as much as the reported inflation. He mentioned that even though he did not improve his home, his tax rate still went higher. He did agree that money should be used to pay for city services and voiced thanks for West Jordan police officers.

Jaime Bevilhymer, a resident for over 40 years, felt it was risky to increase taxes during an election year and believed taxes were already high enough. Being a widow on a fixed income did not allow her the ability to make improvements on her home. She reported that her water and sewer bill was high enough. She was of the opinion that the City plead poverty when it was simply not true and believed the budget was well above what was actually needed. She noted that most of the information shared was based on information received from her sister, Melanie, who worked for the city for 30 years. Even though residents cut back their spending when they were unable to pay their bills, the City continually charges it's citizens for whatever they want. She believed the meeting was being held too late in the month and that citizens were upset and were not being heard. She asked that the Council allocate the money better and run an honest, fair, and transparent city. She pleaded for citizens to hear comments made and know what was happening with their money.

Council Member Kayleen Whitelock commented that the date for holding the Truth in Taxation hearing was provided by the County.

Matt Arbinger, representing several citizens of the city, voiced his concerns regarding the proposed increase. He shared details of how tough the past year had been. He supported an increase in the compensation for the police and fire department, however, he was not in favor of the property tax increase. He would prefer that the city lower park maintenance or street maintenance.

Craig Heath voiced concern regarding an article in the West Jordan Journal by Erin Dixon. He was concerned with comments made in the article for allocation of the funds that will be received for the proposed increase. He was not in favor of using the funds for an increase in IT. He would rather see it go to the Fire and Police Department or even be used for a homeless shelter. He would also like to see the money spent in public outreach. He felt there was a lack of concern for resident desires.

### **Council Chair Zach Jacob closed the hearing at 6:38 PM**

Council Chair Zach Jacob reminded public that the discussion and vote regarding the proposed increase would take place at the next Council meeting on August 25, 2021.

Ms. Steck explained a best practice was that staff not count on a tax increase and instead dedicate funds to one time places, like the IT reserve fund and risk management fund. She confirmed that reserves would

reduce our insurance rates. However, things had changed over the last several weeks with the need for a better police compensation plan. The proposed property tax increase would include that police compensation plan and redirect reserves to cover the increase; 100% of the proposed increase would be dedicated to the compensation plan. She appreciated that property tax was paid with hard earned tax dollars and made efforts to be as transparent as possible. Everything from office supplies, fuel, and dispatch services were outlined in the budget. Property tax rates had not increased since 2018 and staff and council understood it was a difficult request.

Council Member Kayleen Whitelock thanked residents for taking time to come to the meeting and share their views. She found it very helpful to hear from them. She also thanked the West Jordan Police Officer presence during the meeting.

Council Member Melissa Worthen noted that the proposed increase would affect them individually as well. She did not like increasing taxes, however, she did not want to decrease services. The majority of the budget pays for employees and she believed that they were the foundation of the city. If the city did not have good people, they would not have a good city. She reported that she did not want to lose good people. She asked residents to reach out to the Council. She personally reached out to many residents to ask them for their opinions regarding decisions that come before the Council. She reported that there were many grants available for people on a fixed income. It was also reported that every email received by the Council gets answered, even if the answer given isn't the answer wanted. She had heard from many residents that they preferred having small incremental increases in property tax rates rather than large increases of 18%.

Vice Chair Kelvin Green echoed Council Member Whitelock's comments and thanked residents for participating and providing input regarding the proposal. He felt the decision would be tough to make.

Council Member Chris McConnehey thanked participants and was grateful for their thoughts and perspectives. He commented on many who had attended meetings on multiple occasions and felt their concerns were very valid. It was a tough decision to make.

#### **4. ADJOURN**

Council Member McConnehey moved to adjourn the meeting and Council Member Worthen seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

**The meeting adjourned at 6:48 pm**

*I, Cindy Quick, hereby certify that the foregoing minutes represent an accurate summary of what occurred at the meeting held on August 24, 2021. This document constitutes the official minutes for the West Jordan City Council Meeting.*

Cindy M. Quick, MMC  
Council Office Clerk

Approved this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of September 2021